1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

PART V : INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

156 Social stratification and kinship relations dominate interpersonal relations in Amhara society, and, though they put their stamp also on segments of the Amhara cultural pattern, they do not limit the corresponding artistic expression as much as one might expect. Thus, while Amhara artistic expression shares much of the "formality" of the rest of the culture, it evidences considerable potentialities for individual initiative, particularly in non-material expression such as games of intellect.

538 Material culture has not been much developed among the Amhara; artistic expression also has many of the usual characteristics of a 213 non-literate society, since literacy has traditionally been limited to a small minority of the population. This has led both to a reinforcement of formality in literature, and to a playfulness in oral artistic expression which remained unfettered.

1. Communication and Interpersonal Relations.

203 Communication "by grapevine" is still the major method of dissemination of news, rumor, and entertainment. Feudal lords in the past would even make use of "musical signatures" which identified the sender: to prove that a message was actually sent by the sender, the messenger was taught a secret musical note like a code, which identified the master. There was considerable suspicion about interference with 212 203 messages by enemies, who might alter them, so that, when messages were written, the scribe was careful not to leave a margin at the bottom, lest an enemy intercepting the message might add harmful statements falsely reflecting on the sender (e.g. his loyalty). Since most writing was done by formal, professional scribes, and Geez square writing was used, handwriting was not considered sufficient safeguard for identification. This pattern of leaving no margin persists to this day.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

holy ark stands in the center of the church, an area restricted to priests and deacons and consecrated to the performance of the Mass. The second circle is reserved for those few who are privileged to partake of Communion—young children and rare adults who have been married according to the church laws. The third circle is where ordinary people stand during the Mass and where the clergy sing and dance on special holidays. The church itself stands in a compound ringed by an outer wall, representing still another grade of ritual impurity. Those who have eaten before the Mass or have had sexual relations the night before are not supposed to enter the church at all, and must stand outside the outer wall during services.

This spatial pattern is likewise found in the arrangement of people out of doors. The outstanding instance of this is the traditional organization of the military camp of a *negus* or *rās*. In the center of the camp is the large, round tent of the chief, together with tents for the holy ark, high-ranking visitors, and supplies. Around this central area the commanding officers are stationed. They in turn are encircled by the tents of the cavalry. Beyond this ring, finally, is an outer circle composed of the huts of the common soldiery.

Spontaneous arrangements along this line appear during festivals. The person or persons who sing or dance are placed in the center and the spectators form a circle around them. During religious celebrations this circle consists of priests and *dabtarā*. At some distance the laymen watch from an outer circle. Here, as in the home, church, and military camp, concentric circles serve to segregate people according to their place in some hierarchical order.

Society and Human Nature

The Amhara's conceptualization of the human order lends itself as a whole to being articulated in terms of patterns of concentricity and hierarchy. The sociological component of the Amhara peasant world view consists, on the one hand, of a series of notions centered on the individual self and his progressively wider groupings; and, on the other hand, of a series of distinctions which rank persons in accord with criteria of superior and inferior qualities.

The Amhara peasant tends to have a pronounced awareness of his personal ego. The boundaries of his person and property appear firmly marked in his mind and are more important to him than the boundaries of any of his social egos. He likes to live on his own land, at a good distance from neighbors. If he lives in a homestead with other relatives, he prefers to dwell in his own separate building. The Amhara's proverbial comment on the subject is that "Home and the grave are by oneself." He is sensitive about his personal belongings, quick to defend his rights, reluctant to accept suggestions, and inflammable over insults. His conception of the admirable

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

*565 156 157 man, as we shall see in more detail below, includes the quality of leaving others alone.

[577] This strong sense of self is confirmed and symbolized by two conspicuous *565 156 411 Amhara customs: carrying staves and going on trips. A staff, like a pipe, affirms the ego in two ways. As a piece of personal property right at hand, it stimulates a sense of pride of ownership; as something external yet confronting the person, it makes the ego more conscious of its bounded reality. Such sensations are daily experiences for the Amhara peasant, who is rarely separated from the staff in one form or other. When he leaves his homestead he normally carries the hard *dulā*, a potential weapon of defense that likewise affirms his ego by bolstering self-confidence in a dangerous world. He braces the *dulā* against his back as he treks along, or holds it against the [481] front of his shoulder like a rifle. Older men walk using it as a cane. A special kind of staff made of softer wood (*zang*) is carried by pious and elderly [481] men. Participants in devotional services lean on still another type of staff (*maquāmiyā*) which is distributed in the church for that purpose.

Traveling is another custom which affirms the ego, at least when one *565 156 484 travels spontaneously and not in organized company. As the individual moves past various stimuli, his self-consciousness is heightened by the contrast between a persisting ego and a constantly changing environment. As a traveler par excellence—and a lone traveler, unless social rank requires the presence of retainers—the Amhara peasant frequently removes himself from familiar home settings and confronts an outside world. He loves to go on the road and will travel at the slightest provocation. For him a distance of two or three hours by foot is like the American's trip to the corner drugstore. Whether to visit relatives or pay respects after death, to go to market or to court, to get holy water at a distant church, or to look after land in a far away district, the Amhara peasant is on the move dozens of times each year, often for trips involving two or three days of travel.

*565 156 829 602 609 Because of the great emphasis on the self in Amhara experience and culture, one may for the moment say that the personal ego is the central object in the Amhara peasant's view of society. Exactly what might be meant by this statement and in what respects it needs qualification are questions that will be taken up in the concluding chapter. If it is so, certainly the next most prominent social object in his world is the circle of close ones, or *zamad*. *Zamad* refers in the first instance to consanguineal kin, and is distinguished from the category of those who are strangers, or *bā'ed*. This is perhaps the most important of all the sociological distinctions made by the Amhara: the former, *zamad*, are seen as entitled to the warmest hospitality, while toward *bā'ed* indifference and suspicion are appropriate responses.

*565 156 602 This does not mean that the kin group is a corporate entity whose interests and identity transcend that of the individual. On the contrary, the notion of

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

zamad is highly subjective, and all constellations of ***zamad*** reflect the interests and affections of ego. For the quality of kinship can be attributed to persons who are not consanguineal relatives, and this is done without resorting to fictions of affiliation. The term ***wandam***, for example, meaning "brother," is simply applied to any male person of about the same age to whom one feels closely attached. The term ***zamad*** itself is applied to anyone to whom one feels a close personal tie—even to a mere fellow-countryman whom one happens to meet in a distant region. It is thus not taking too great a liberty to translate the term ***zamad*** as "close ones."

The primarily subjective nature of the circle of ***zamad*** derives not only from the fact that it includes friends as readily as actual blood relatives. Within the bounds of consanguinity, the composition of the kin group with which a person identifies fluctuates according to his current needs, particularly with respect to land use rights. As Allan Hoben has demonstrated, corporate descent groups are important among the Amhara in that rights to land use are allocated on the basis of hereditary claims possessed by such groups; but the fact that in this ambilineal descent system each individual may claim multiple active affiliations, and enjoys a relatively wide range of choice, means that the particular corporate descent group with which an individual affiliates in order to claim his rights varies according to what land is subject to disputation. He may claim land via his father, his mother, or his children (through their mothers' rights), and in each case may trace descent back to a variety of apical ancestors.[9]

The next most inclusive sociological concept beyond the ego-oriented circle of ***zamad*** is that of ***agar***, or "homeland."* The co-residents of one's ***agar***, like those who comprise one's circle of ***zamad***, are regarded as forming an important "in-group," outside of which all other persons are a priori rejected. Yet the Amharic concept of homeland, like that of kin, does not refer to a fixed social entity; its referent varies according to the context in which the individual chooses to use it. Thus, as we have seen, the concept of ***agar*** may be used to refer to one's parish, district, province, or even nation.

A more specialized dichotomy of some prominence in the outlook of the Amhara peasant hinges on variation in the altitude of homelands. Inhabitants of lowlands (***qolaññä***) and dwellers of higher regions (***dägaññä***) tend to be conceived as polar cultural types. Different sets of habits and traits are attributed to them. Thus, according to one set of stereotypes, the ***qolaññä*** is viewed as a heavy drinker and hot tempered, while the ***dägaññä*** is viewed as a heavy eater and inclined more to litigation than to violence. Again, the

* The less prominent category of ***wagan*** is intermediate between these two. ***Wagan*** has a primarily political connotation; it consists of one's consanguineal and affinal kin, friends and close retainers, all who may be mobilized in the event of political or military competition.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

838 hold hands when talking, embrace each other when walking, and sleep in
571 each other's arms, there seems to be neither practice nor knowledge of unsublimated homosexuality among the traditional Amhara. Boys often address one another in the feminine intimate form, and girls sometimes use the masculine form among themselves or call each other "brother," without having
831 their own sexual identities in the least confused thereby. Amhara males, in
[834] particular, have a proud cult of virility, though it is not compulsive in the sense that they must boast of sexual conquests; to talk of sexual exploits in front of others in such a manner would be a great shame, and such matters
[577] are simply taken in one's stride. (The other side of masculinity, physical courage, is the subject of a great deal of boasting. The term for masculinity, *wandnat*, is synonymous with *guabaznat*, or "bravery.")

* 883 The advent of puberty therefore makes the young Amhara simply more
882 self-conscious about the characteristics proper to his or her sex. Girls begin to groom themselves and think of finer clothes. Boys proudly take on a "man's share" of the work; and, what is more, become somewhat unruly, tempestuous, quick to pick fights, and vaunt their new powers. The *goramsā* often
[41] carries a special kind of *dulā* that is symbolic of his youthful masculinity. Unusually short, stout, and hard, it is convenient for concealing beneath his clothes when he goes out at night on sexual adventures, and dangerous enough to convince himself that he is quite brave. As soon as conditions permit, adolescents of both sexes enter their first marriage with alacrity.

155 With respect to psychosocial identity, the situation is slightly more com-
• 156 plex, in that Abyssinian society does provide a variety of social roles for its males. For the most part, boys faithfully follow the examples of their fathers. This is true in the case of noblemen, priests, traders, and artisans, as well as for the great peasant majority concerning whom the following remarks are presented.

565 The pattern of peasant life is broad enough to fit the dispositions of most
554 of those who are called on to continue it. The typical Amhara adolescent boy
156 therefore seeks no more in life than to be given a pretty wife whose father has a lot of land, to work so well that his father will be generous in giving him land and cattle when he marries, to produce abundant grain so he can eat plenty, and to become renowned in the land as an outstanding litigant.

Under certain conditions, however, this pattern may not fit. The reason may be chiefly economic: too many siblings and too little land in the family may force him to seek some other livelihood. Or it may have to do primarily with resentment with his lot under an especially rigid and unkind father. Still another motive may lie in the boy's yearning for a more suitable identity.

156 Whatever the reasons for his marginality may have been, the adolescent
554 boy in traditional Abyssinia could respond to such a situation by pursuing
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a different identity. Religion and warfare were the two spheres most likely to attract him. Although trade and manual arts were possibilities for those whose industry exceeded their status-consciousness, they were considered the business of other ethnic groups and normally rejected by a self-respecting Amhara. When the Amhara youth left home for a new life, he was usually heading either for the school of some church teacher or the quarters of some chieftain.

Today, as in former times, the role of priest is known from childhood as a possible model for the peasant boy. He and his companions often imitate the clergy and their ceremonies in their play. The wish to become a priest is kindled by a number of interests—desire for the material benefits accorded the clergy; curiosity about the mysteries of the church; envy of the great prestige of the clergy; hope for a better chance of going to heaven after death. During adolescence the outlook of the boy who seeks to become a priest deviates from that of the *goramsā* described above. Instead of the shrill, blood-heating *shĭllala* war chants he prefers the gentle hymns of the church; instead of the frenzied dancing and singing of the young braves he prefers the schooled dance of the clergy; instead of pursuing women, he is inclined to turn his head the other way when a girl appears.

The military alternative does not seem to be an ideal of Amhara children. They rarely see soldiers; and when they did in former times, it was usually in the unhappy circumstance of seeing the family's reserves plundered. It is not until the time of puberty and after that the great upsurge of aggressive instinct has turned the thoughts of many an Amhara youth to fighting. Chafing under parental domination or bristling with resentment because of being an illegitimate offspring or a stepchild, he may be anxious to turn his hostility against some enemy. He may imagine the free life of a soldier more attractive than the drudgery of the peasant's lot. In the days of feudal armies, he may have heard news about some warlord on the rise and thus have hopes, by attaching himself as a follower, of winning booty and the laurels of a hero, perhaps eventually the powers of a chieftain.

Whether the peasant boy chooses church school or the warpath, his move has frequently been an all-or-none move. The peasant boy can do nothing without the consent of his father, and normally his father will not permit him to do anything except carry on the farmwork and prepare himself to care for his parents in their old age and to inherit the family land. If there should be some sign that the son does not want to continue in his father's footsteps, the latter will do everything he can short of disinheritance—and ofttimes that—to persuade him otherwise.

And so, some restless day, eyes fixed on some alluring goal, the Amhara youth might run away and not be seen again. If he should return, it would

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be many years later, as a learned priest or *dabtarā* or as a successful warrior or official, and some sort of reconciliation might be effected with his family. In either case, from a sociological viewpoint, the rebellious youth is merely preparing himself to take over one of the more specialized functions on which the wider social order depends. His break with his parents does not signify a revolt against society, but, if anything, a closer attachment to society through more intimate alliance with its highest values, religion and warfare.

Thus there has always been some room for the attainment of a new social identity in Abyssinia. Although the rigidity of paternal authority often meant that it must be attained through rebellion, the adolescent could eat his cake of defiance and still have his cake of loyalty; and the social system was well served thereby.

ADOLESCENCE IN CHANGING ETHIOPIA

The foregoing description of adolescence still obtains for the vast majority of Amhara youth today. Side by side with this traditional pattern of "growing up on the farm," however, a quite different pattern of childhood and adolescence has been developing in Addis Ababa and in some of the provincial capitals. This new pattern follows the course of experience provided by participation in the government school system. It has radically interrupted the traditional rhythm of growing up and has posed more integrative problems than it has yet been able to solve.

The Welfare School

Public education in Ethiopia prior to the Italian invasion represented a small but significant trickle of activity alongside the mainstream of traditional institutions. Perhaps some six to seven hundred boys and girls received the beginnings of a modern education in the government schools of Addis Ababa by 1935.[9] Many others received some elementary education in government provincial schools and in schools operated by foreign religious missions, though the latter never played as significant a role in Ethiopia as they did in colonial Africa.

During the occupation, Ethiopians were prevented from acquiring anything higher than elementary education, but the Italians did construct a number of school buildings for their own nationals which facilitated the growth of the Ethiopian school system after 1941. By 1944 there were some 25,000 pupils enrolled in government schools, a figure which rose to 60,000 by 1950 and reached 234,000 in 1963.[10]

The base of the Ethiopian educational program has been an eight-year elementary curriculum, the first four years being taught in Amharic and the

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

121 been affected by modernizing agents for but a relatively brief period and in
571 a relatively diluted fashion. The beliefs and values which the returnees
177 acquired while abroad concern national development, technical competence,
178 and individuality, while the norms of the social structure in which they must live are based on the values of loyalty to monarch, ascribed status, and authoritarian relations.

121 Of many possible types of response to such a situation of strain, four are
571 common among the Ethiopian intelligentsia. These we may designate by the
177 terms Opportunism, Withdrawal, Reformism, and Rebellion. With reference
178 to the three variables of commitment to modern goals and norms, acceptance
156 of existing authorities, and the distinction between "activity" and "passivity," these patterns may be represented schematically as in Table 14.[59]

TABLE 14

MODES OF ADAPTATION OF ETHIOPIAN RETURNEES

	Commitment to Modern Values	Acceptance of Existing Authorities	"Activity"
Opportunism	−	+	+
Withdrawal	+	−	−
Reformism	+	+	+
Rebellion	+	−	+

Opportunism is the mode of adaptation in which the returnee's commitment to modern goals and norms is eclipsed by his passion for status, power,
554 and income. He differs from the traditional aspirant for high position in Abyssinia in that two of his status qualifications are novel--residence abroad, and a university degree—and above all in that the pursuit of his personal goals entails a *renunciation* of nationalistic ideals and universalistic standards which were nurtured while abroad. For some opportunists this is no real problem: their study abroad was all along essentially a façade to be used in advancing their careers. But for the others the process of becoming an opportunist is a gradual one and attended by chronic self-recriminations, as the returnee finds himself compulsively agreeing with his superiors and flattering them on every occasion, and performing actions primarily for the sake of advancement rather than for the sake of doing a job well.

> It is impossible to go on pursuing progressive principles indiscriminately. I sometimes see my friends doing things now which we used to condemn

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

when we were students abroad together. I wonder at times if I am losing sight of my principles altogether.

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Withdrawal is the solution of those who have retained their principles at the expense of being effectual in action. The routes of escape are varied. One way is transferring attention to problems outside the country—to international relations, problems of pan-Africanism, or the gossip about London, Paris, and New York.

To me the independence of all African nations is more important than the progress of Ethiopia.

Some spend their energies in convivial relations with resident Westerners (diplomatic and technical assistance personnel, foreign businessmen) or in the traditional rounds of family visiting. Quite a few returnees lose themselves in card-playing or chess whenever they can, and a number have taken to heavy drinking. Often the returnee who withdraws shows no "symptoms" other than a general constriction of his life into narrow work routines and creature functions. At the same time he may be experiencing a fairly acute sense of estrangement.

Our generation is not really living. We are not "engaged." The simple weaver—most of the people in this country—are "engaged." We are not; we live from day to day. When I leave work I go to the Ras Hotel or somewhere else. I don't want to go home, there is nothing there for me. I have nothing to work for. I have no family, nor any interest in saving money.

The third type of response, Reformism, involves the attempt both to maintain principles and to be effective in action under the existing political order. This alternative places great demands on the personality system and might well be designated as the pattern of "moral heroism."

What we lack today is proper organization. In default of organization, we are forced to rely on morality.

The reformist returnee serves his country according to universalistic standards even though these norms are scarcely institutionalized; even though, in other words, he is likely to be criticized and even punished for maintaining standards in the face of demands by superiors and relatives to do otherwise, or for solving problems in a rational manner on his own initiative. Yet if he is officially disregarded or censured, his efforts do not go unnoticed by the patriotic modernizing elements of the population who, in a covert, informal system of communication, tend to establish severe judgments on the "bad guys" and the "good guys," and to idolize the latter as potential leaders.

In the case of Rebellion, finally, the attempt is made to be active in the pursuit of modern goals but in a spirit of basic alienation from the existing

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

121 authorities. Except for a very few eccentric individuals who have seemed
571 oblivious to the dangers of speaking out their criticism of the status quo in
177 public, this has in the nature of current circumstances necessarily involved
178 clandestine activity. Returnees have been involved in small conspiratorial
• 156 groups since the mid-fifties. The December, 1960, coup d'état has been the
[669] most ambitious rebellious project to be acted out so far. Similarly motivated
[668] activities have included the duplication and distribution of subversive literature, and the formation of small groups as groundwork for an eventual political party.

Our data do not permit reliable estimates of the frequency of these different modes of adaptation among the returnees. It is important to note, however, that individuals often change from one mode to another in the course of their experience after return and that many follow more than one pattern at the same time. It is unlikely that the total number of returnees oriented primarily as rebels has ever exceeded two per cent. Most of them move in and out of phases of Reformism, Withdrawal, and Opportunism, depending to a large extent on the accidents of their appointments. A more concrete picture of their experience may be suggested by the following case study, that of a Western-educated Ethiopian who went from a phase of Withdrawal to one of Reformism tinged with Opportunism.

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571 The Adjustment of "Haile": Case Study of a Returnee
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October, 1958. Haile has recently returned from four years of study in a Western country. He speaks very critically about the state of things in Ethiopia. He is particularly upset by the prevailing inefficiency, the lack of industriousness, and the interminable procrastination (*ǰishi naga*).

January, 1959. Haile seems deeply depressed. The ministry in which he has been placed affords him no opportunity to work effectively and the job he has bears no relation to what he was trained for. He has withdrawn more into himself, but to all outward appearances plays perfectly well, with great self-assurance, the role of the Amhara bureaucrat.

July, 1959. Now Haile is working in a different ministry, in a job somewhat more closely related to his training. He appears to feel productive and useful now, and his criticism is constructive. For example, he frequently compares the situation in the United States and Ethiopia, to show how the same sort of problem can be solved more readily in the U.S. because of its greater facilities. Though Ethiopia's comparative handicaps frustrate him, he talks of plans for the development of Ethiopia with some enthusiasm. . . . Haile complains of an

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

overload of work, noting that he must not only do his own work but also rectify the mistakes made by others which are brought to him. In his whole branch of the ministry, he finds only two really effective workers besides himself, and they, too, are returnees. . . . He feels fortunate in having encountered no major opposition to the things he is doing in his work and points happily to the fact that his assistant minister has supported him throughout.

October, 1959. Haile now is saying that things are fine in Addis Ababa and stresses the great improvement that has been made during the past five years. He claims that he is getting along fine in his ministry, because his job is straight "busy work." Even so, he is not a pure "ritualist"; he has already negotiated a number of reforms in the operations of his office. His general outlook seems bright—partly, no doubt, because he is "arriving" (what with printed name-cards and a smoothly functioning job) but also because he has a pretty fiancée whom he plans to marry next year. . . . At another point, however, he shows great exasperation over the considerable conflict among factions within the ministry. He decries the nepotism practiced by the heads of these factions. He says that he tries to stay independent of their intrigues.

June, 1960. Recently Haile was given additional responsibilities in his ministry, and he expects a raise in salary soon. Although this new work is still further removed from the subjects he studied while abroad than was his previous job, he no longer complains about not being hired to do what he had been trained for or about not being used. He remains unhappy about his minister, who brings in his own men from the outside rather than promote men from the ranks—"or else I would have been a director general by now." On the other hand, he mentions with evident pleasure the fact that the Emperor sent over a gift at the time of his wedding. . . . Haile's wife is a simple, traditional sort of Ethiopian girl. He seems happy with her and with their home—an old, poorly built structure that is falling apart, but which she has taken pains to enliven with a few decorations, and has equipped with a radio. He looks forward to the prospect of building a house on their own land sometime in the future. Meanwhile, a baby is on the way. . . . The circle has come full swing. Haile talks proudly about his work, his family, and his country.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

brothels for dancing and more intimate relations. (Returnees normally do not have patience for the shy, traditional girls; and they are too concerned about public opinion to be seen visiting brothels. When they or the locals do visit the brothels, it is often by way of a backdoor entrance.) When they marry, the locals almost invariably choose a traditional type of wife with relatively little education and with whom they expect to have an authoritarian relationship.

In sum: the local is not so afflicted by those problems which derive from the central dilemma of the returnee—how to fulfil himself according to modern standards in an intractable, traditional environment. The local's dilemma typically lies in a different realm, that of economic and social mobility. Whereas the returnee has been given a comparatively high income and status almost as a matter of course, the local has normally started his work life with a relatively low salary and little prestige. If the returnee has felt deprived relative to the Westerners in whose society he has lived, the local has felt deprived relative to the returnee.

The local lives on a day-to-day basis at a relatively simple standard. Though he shares the returnee's passion for woolen suits and, in many cases, for a car of his own, he is not, like the returnee, preoccupied with the quest for housing that conforms to Western standards. Except for those with extraordinary talents and family connections, the locals have had difficulty locating jobs that they feel are not beneath their dignity and which pay salaries sufficient to cover their relatively modest needs. They customarily receive a starting salary in the neighborhood of Eth$150. The more ambitious and fortunate among them have, by changing jobs, manipulating superiors, and improving skills, worked their way up to salaries in the Eth$400–$500 category. Some have become provincial teachers for a while, in order to accumulate money on which to live while shopping for a position in Addis Ababa and with which to influence some higher official to grant it to them. There remains a hard core of locals who feel they are underpaid and live in constant resentment of this situation.

This resentment has produced a general sort of negativism which characterizes many of the locals, a negativism expressed in the form of backbiting and denunciation of the higher government officials and the nobility generally. They decry social injustice and the uses of nepotism. They moralize profusely against those whom fortune has shown greater favors. But not all their social criticism is born of resentment. There are also among the locals many young men who are comfortably situated but fired by patriotic fervor with a desire for social reform.

The local is as deeply concerned about asserting his status vis-à-vis the less educated as he is to advance his position in the hierarchy. Locals are extreme-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

ly meticulous about the state of their clothes. They have their shoes shined several times daily, even when they are eating only one solid meal per day. They are intent on receiving the proper deference—for example, on being served properly in a hotel. This concern for status is projected in the form of an intense nationalism that considers the speedy displacement of non-Ethiopians holding important jobs in the country a more urgent need than the establishment of effective modern institutions and universalistic standards.

Some locals can be found, of course, whose problems and aspirations resemble those of the returnees, and vice versa. However, the characteristics here associated with the two types follow logically from their basic situation and have been observed sufficiently to justify this depicting of them in terms of ideal types. The distinction is further justified on the grounds that the two groups have developed a modicum of corporate identity and a degree of mutual antagonism which was particularly pronounced in the mid-fifties.

The returnees were at first inclined to regard their locally educated countrymen with snobbish pride because of the keen sense of superiority which study abroad conferred. It was natural, moreover, for the returnees to associate most closely with those who had shared the very important personal experience of living abroad, and so they tended to neglect their former schoolmates who never crossed the seas. At times, in fact, they scarcely bothered to exchange greetings with them.

The sense that they were being regarded as inferiors embittered the locals. At the same time they were jealous that they, too, had not had the opportunity to study abroad. These mutual incriminations were heightened by economic competition, the returnees claiming that those who stayed behind had the advantage of working their way up into significant and lucrative positions, the locals believing that a degree from abroad was an automatic entree to a good job.

The latent antagonism between locals and returnees came to a head in 1957, with the simultaneous publication in the *Voice of Ethiopia* of an article by a local criticizing returnee behavior[81] and the presentation of a play by the National Patriotic Association which caricatured them. The play, for example, showed a returnee entering the office of a minister, patting him on the back, puffing cigarette smoke into his eyes, sitting back with his feet up on the minister's desk and talking on and on disrespectfully. Another returnee was shown failing to recognize his own mother when she comes into his office, exclaiming: "Woman, get out of here!" A small group of returnees protested these insults with a petition to the Emperor, who is said to have brought some criticism to bear upon the authorities involved.

With the return of increasing numbers of Ethiopians from study abroad, however, the prestige of a foreign degree has diminished, and the appearance of classes of locally educated A.B.'s, who have remained in the country to

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

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INDIVIDUALISM AND THE QUEST FOR SOCIAL PROGRESS

*121 A deep-going process of individualization has commonly been regarded as one of the characteristic features of the early stages of modernization. Whether hailed as a basis for economic rationalism and the embodiment of libertarian ideals or decried as the solvent of communal solidarities and traditional identities, this emergent individualism tends to be viewed against the image of a base line traditional society whose members are enmeshed in various solidary associations, bound by collective obligations, and encompassed by communal restraints.[1]

*121 181 • [156] While it is probable that such an image exaggerates the degree of corporateness that obtains in most traditional societies, in the case of Abyssinia it is demonstrably wide of the mark. A characteristic individualism has impressed more than one observer of Abyssinian society in the past. Perhaps not by accident, those who have been most responsive to this characteristic have been of French nationality. Arnauld d'Abbadie, writing more than a century ago, depicted the Abyssinian as an irrepressible foe of uniformity and despotism.[2] More recently the noted linguist, Marcel Cohen, in one of his rare but highly perceptive sociological essays, described the Abyssinian as "*membre d'une société individualiste.*"[3] In so doing he has suggested an interesting perspective from which to examine Amhara society as a whole, a perspective which may also throw some light on the previously raised question concerning the obstacles to solidary action among modern-educated Ethiopians.

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*121 181 186 619 *Landsmann*) regularly evokes considerable sentiment. There is also a strong sense of solidarity based on the use of Amharic—both among the Amhara as a whole vis-à-vis other Ethiopians who either do not know Amharic or speak it imperfectly, and among regional dialect groups. The people of Gojjam and of the Gondar area are particularly chauvinistic with regard to the quality of their Amharic.

*121 181 621 This attachment to symbols of religion, territory, and language is important in providing a basis for identity and morale. Yet these attachments are of relatively little import in shaping a self-transcending orientation in the day-to-day activities of the Amhara; for the crucial context of these activities is the local community, and in the civic sphere the Amhara manifest very little solidarity. Indeed, it may be said that the Amhara have virtually no sense of "community" at all, for the concept can scarcely be rendered in idiomatic Amharic.

*121 181 361 621 The absence of community sentiment among the Amhara is implied by their ecology. Not only did the Amhara fail to produce extensive and durable urban centers (with the limited exception of Gondar) but their country is even barren of that frequent cornerstone of peasant life, the village. The Amhara have distributed themselves thinly, scattering in groups of fours and fives up and down their mountains and plateaus. Larger aggregations are found on the estates of noblemen, but these constitute expanded private households rather than civic communities. The Amhara justify this dispersion of their population on the grounds that wide spaces are needed for the grazing of livestock and that a man needs to live on the land he farms. But herding and farming have been carried out well enough elsewhere by people living together in villages, and it is quite probable that this ecological pattern is due as much as anything else to the Amhara's preference for not having too much association with those outside his immediate kin group. In his own words, the Amhara prefers the kind of neighbor who "does not push the boundaries" (*wassan aynakām*), and believes, as noted earlier, that *bēt-ennā māqbar labetchāw naw* ("home and the grave are by oneself"). It is a preference manifest in such solitary living arrangements as that of divorced women who sometimes live by themselves in the country, eking out a living by spinning cotton or brewing spirits, and in the age-old predilection of Abyssinian monks for anchoritism.

*121 181 • 156 157 The moral counterpart of this ecological pattern is a preoccupation with private interests that leaves little room for the consideration of communal needs. According to the Amhara vocabulary of motives, social action is motivated first and foremost by the pursuit of *tīqem*, or narrowly conceived self-interest.[9] This matter-of-fact acceptance of egoistic motivation among the Amhara appears during what is a common occurrence: the shameless subversion of occasions which are set up to consider communal problems and to

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symbolize communal solidarities by the forthright assertion of individual claims and grievances.

In virtually every instance of a consideration of communal projects or needs that the author observed or heard of, the dominant characteristic of the discussion was a vigorous and uncompromising assertion of individual claims. If it was a question of allotting spaces in a new marketplace, each discussant was vociferating that the portion allotted to him was insufficient. If it was a question of securing more land for various communal purposes, the various property owners involved orated against contributing a square foot unless reimbursed at some preposterous figure. If it was a scene in court or a police station, everyone with any personal grievance, real or imagined, felt it perfectly proper to interrupt at any point and give vent to his opinion. If it was a question of rebuilding a ravaged church or constructing a road, personal disputations undermined all efforts toward communal action. If it was simply a ceremonial occasion, the peaceful setting one might have expected was shattered by the airing of private disputes.

> Today a new church building was dedicated. It was built to replace one that had been destroyed more than two decades ago by the Italians. People from all over the area made the journey to attend this celebration. All night long and well into the morning the priests and *dabtarā* sang and danced, accompanied as usual by sistrums and drums. Later in the morning, after the church had been officially sanctified, everyone was assembled in the open space in the church compound to listen to some verses composed in honor of the event by one of the local *bālābbāt*, a man who had been a key figure in getting the church rebuilt. He had scarcely finished reciting his poem when a woman in the audience spoke up in anger, arguing that the new church would involve more taxes and in some way would affect her property rights adversely. While he was trying to pacify her, others interrupted and began airing grievances of their own. What was to have been the climax of an occasion for the expression of communal solidarity ended as a bedlam of argument.[10]

The one area in which communal sentiments have seemed fairly strong among the Amhara has been in connection with the pursuit of outlaws. It is customary—in some Amhara districts, at least—for the local inhabitants to band together in informal posses when threatened by the presence of one or more *shīftā*, or "outlaws." Yet even here, in his attitudes toward the *shīftā*, the Amhara reveals an ambivalence regarding the maintenance of civil order and security.

The term *shīftā* had, in former times, primarily a political connotation. It referred to someone who rebelled against his feudal superior and was applied only to persons of relatively high status.[11] More recently the term has been vulgarized and broadened to include any sort of outlaw in the rural areas. In

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

cal animosities which have weakened the nobility as a status group both in relation to the emperor and in relation to foreign countries. Another respect in which Amhara parochialism has been expressed is the addiction to regional stereotypes, according to which the Tigrean has been depicted as flighty, irresponsible, and "dry"; the Gondarē as intolerably proud; the Gojjami as sly and treacherous; and the Shoan as calculating and untrustworthy. Despite its long history as a nation, Ethiopia probably never experienced more than the dimmest stirrings of a truly national sentiment among its people; and more than once in the past century have regional lords strengthened the hand of European powers in Ethiopia by seeking their help in the combat against other local rulers.

Self and Others

In addition to considering the extent to which the members of a society identify with the needs and symbols of their more inclusive collectivities, one may also define the individualistic disposition on the dimension of personal interaction. Egoism contrasts, in other words, not only with the disposition to perceive collective purposes as one's own, but also with the disposition to seek solidarity and mutuality in face-to-face relations.

This aspect of egoism/solidarism is studied by surveying the more important forms of interaction that appear in a given society. In the survey of elementary social behavior among the Amhara now to be reported, two criteria were used to establish the importance of any given form: (1) the frequency with which it was observed, and (2) the extent to which it was stylized or "institutionalized." These criteria were not embodied in any systematic observational procedures; the only control over the observer's bias here is my own deliberate effort to present a balanced and accurate picture.

We may begin by considering the more solidaristic forms. Interaction among the Amhara is characterized, first of all, by a sort of *sensuous camaraderie*. The Amhara enjoy bodily contact. Members of the same sex customarily hold one another's hands for long periods while conversing, or embrace one another in casual fellowship. Crowds of commoners cheerfully huddle close to one another on the floor through the night when they have assembled for some social function and cannot return home the same day. Relatives and companions of the same sex incline to sleep in one another's arms, at least in the chillier altitudes.

Both their style of dress and their manner of eating give the Amhara a ready way to express this comradely feeling. Their untailored cotton or wool cloth easily adapts itself to being shared. Except perhaps for individuals of high social status, the typical Amhara is ready to use his toga as a blanket-wrap for both himself and another whom he may scarcely know.

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Spontaneous co-operation is most in evidence among the Amhara at times of crisis. When death is announced, relatives and friends promptly repair to the home of the deceased and offer their help. They build the coffin and construct a *dāss* (a temporary shelter near the house to accommodate all the expected visitors). They bring food and drink to help provide for the many who will come to pay their respects, and will similarly provide help on the occasion of the big memorial feasts to follow. Like assistance is rendered during other crises, such as prolonged illnesses or fire. Such forms of co-operation set another significant limit to egoistic orientation among the Amhara.

It is in the realm of interaction involving serious interests, touching layers of the personality deeper than those required for the formalities of etiquette, that Amhara egoism is most conspicuous. Here everything seems to conspire against generous communication and concord of opinion. As we have already observed, the Amhara are quick to become argumentative in ordinary conversation. *Litigation* is one of the most prominent forms of interaction among the Amhara. One can scarcely spend a day in the Amhara countryside without encountering litigants, whether under a tree, at a marketplace, or in the courtyard of some lord. A nobleman can never travel about the country without being accosted on the way by litigants anxious to have him hear their stories.

Litigation is, of course, an endemic feature of peasant civilizations. Yet there can be no doubt that for the Amhara this form embodies a basic psychological disposition that differs from that of the people of other peasant civilizations. In traditional China, to take a case of marked contrast, such interpersonal conflict, far from being relished, was deliberately avoided. The Chinese considered going to court to be an extravagance, and the village judge was one of the most underemployed members of the community. In China, parties to a dispute preferred to assemble at the teahouse and to seek a solution through discussion and negotiation. The Amhara, on the other hand, seeks to maximize the opportunity for self-assertion through litigious disputes.* Ordinary sociability among the Amhara is saturated with references to litigation. Current court cases comprise one of the more common topics of conversation.

Beyond litigation, *conflict* is often expressed in more violent forms. Fights with the *dulā* erupt when altercation becomes too heated. Throwing stones is another accepted mode of combat, especially among youth. Protracted enmities tend to eventuate in such acts as house-burning, assault with swords or rifles, and (according to Amhara belief, at least) poisoning.

While it is true that Amhara culture provides means and a certain amount

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* Some indication of the gross national significance of this phenomenon is afforded by the following comparison: twenty-seven high court judges are sufficient to handle the litigation for all of England and Wales; the corresponding number for Ethiopia is *one hundred and eighteen*.

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of moral pressure for the reconciliation of conflict, it appears to place greater emphasis on the acting out of aggression. It does this, first of all, by defining a number of acts as offenses which justify violent retribution of some sort. Appropriation of one's land, seduction of one's wife, and injury of one's relatives are acts of this nature, and it is incumbent on the offended party to seek personal revenge or, as the Amhara put it, "to return the debt" (*bedder mammalas*). It is considered shameful to remain passive when so affronted, an attitude expressed in the following couplet:

Balaw ba-dimotfar daggmaw ba-wānzā,
Bābbāt ristennā yallam bamist wāzzā.

Shoot him with the dimotfar,* get him again with a wanza,*
Taking your father's land or your wife away, that is no joking matter.

Aggressiveness is further encouraged by the Amhara ego ideal of masculinity.[13] The identity of Amhara males is very much bound up with their capacity for aggressiveness, by both violent and verbal means. A man who has killed someone is regarded with a certain amount of veneration, and the act of killing is itself praised in verses such as:

Saw gadlu saw gadlu: saw magdal yébajāl,
Saw yālgadala saw sihēd yāngolājāl.

Kill a man! Kill a man! It is good to kill a man!
One who has not killed a man moves around sleepily.

Similarly, verbal aggression is encouraged by the inclusion of excellence at litigation and insulting in the domain of proper male behavior.[14] The bestowal of insults is a rather stylized, if dangerous, procedure among the Amhara. According to Amhara customary law, insulting is a legal offense. The new criminal code provides for a gradation of penalties according to the seriousness of the insult, including fines which run from Eth$15 to as much as hundreds of dollars. The most serious insults include *bāryā* ("slave"); *ṭayb* ("evil-eyed artisan"); and *qomātā* ("leper"). Insults of lesser to medium degrees of seriousness include the following:

hodām	"greedy" (literally, "bellied")
wafrām	"fat"
sakārām	"drunkard"
quashāshā	"dirty"
amadām	"scaly-faced" (literally, "ashen")

* Types of rifles.

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live near the same master, they divide up the neighboring countryside to avoid duplication in their begging.

The ordained clergy are themselves given to begging, for items ranging from contributions to the local church to petty personal effects. High-ranking visitors to their locale are customarily made the objects of such solicitations. Another type of begging is practiced by the minstrels who wander about the country with their one-stringed fiddles and fecund wit, coaxing contributions from any audience they can capture. In addition to these there are numerous professional beggars—the maimed, the diseased, and the poverty-stricken—who attach themselves to a well-attended church or monastery if they are unable to travel. The *lālibalā* is a notable type within this category of mendicants.[28]

In addition to honoring the periodic appeals of beggars, "big men" are supposed to provide yearly feasts (*gĭber*) at which beggars of all the above descriptions are fed. In all these instances, the solicitation and bestowal of charity contributes a solidaristic element to the network of personal relations among the Amhara.

The foregoing analysis of forms of interaction among the Amhara has been undertaken in order to gain material for generalizing about a psychological disposition. Our unspoken, tautological assumption has been that the ways in which individuals typically relate to social objects (i.e., other persons and collectivities) represent the sociologically relevant aspects of their psychology. Egoism and solidarism have been used here as concepts for depicting one dimension of "social character," using this term in the specific sense of comprising those aspects of personality which are both socially shared and constitutive of those actions that are oriented to social objects. We may now attempt to summarize the preceding discussion with the following definition of Amhara social character as it relates to the concept of individualism: The Amhara is primarily disposed to structure interaction in terms of self-assertion, dissension, and distrust, and to be indifferent to the concept of civil community. At the same time this egoistic orientation is blended with a warm and kindly sense of sociability, an occasional mood of generosity, and a refined sensibility regarding differences in status and the readiness to pay deference accordingly.

INDEPENDENCE VERSUS CONSTRAINT

In the previous section we considered the nature of the individual's orientation toward others and toward collectivities in Amhara society. Our question now is the converse: what order of demands is made upon individuals by the institutions of that society? Specifically, we shall be concerned primarily with the degree to which the norms which govern institutional roles are

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*121 Amhara society as marked by a moderately high degree of independence.
18 This is to say that Amhara society gives relatively wide rein to individual impulse in action. It is not to say that Amhara culture places a high value on the moral worth of the individual personality. That is a separate question, which we shall now proceed to explore.

INDIVIDUALITY VERSUS CONFORMITY AND ANONYMITY

*121 The extent to which individual personality is valued in a society is reflected
181 primarily in two aspects of its culture. One of these comprises its processes
• 156 of education, in the broadest sense of the term; the other, its forms of art. The character of these aspects of culture reveal, respectively, the degree of concern for the *development* of an individualized self and the degree of concern for the *expression* of an individualized self.

Education and Socialization

*121 Obedience and politeness are the overriding goals in bringing up children
155 among the Amhara. After a prolonged and indulged infancy, the Amhara
861 child from about three years on is subjected to a regime of discipline and
867 repression. He is taught to fulfill without question any request made by any
[854] older person. He is conditioned to stand quietly whenever guests are present and to stand facing the wall while his parents or guests eat their dinner. If addressed by elders, especially those outside his immediate family, he is expected to reply in a barely audible whisper—a norm that is sometimes adhered to with such pathetic faithfulness that it has become the object of gentle satire in a short story by the young Ethiopian writer, Tadesse Liban.[26] Children who are noisy and disrespectful are referred to contemptuously by the term *bālagē*, meaning "rude."

*121 The desires and interests of an Amhara child are not taken into account
155 by those who raise him. He is provided with a bare minimum of clothes,
855 and little effort is expended in procuring him playthings,[27] although in some
524 families little dolls made of rags (*ashāngulit*) are produced. Children have
*121 a rich play-life with their peers, but this consists mostly in imitating various
155 adult activities. Organized games occur very rarely, the chief one—*gannā*—
857 being played as a rule but once a year, on Christmas Day.[28] The traditional songs and dances are learned from other children while tending the herds, but children are not encouraged to perform them in front of adults. The
*121 opinions of children are never expressed, let alone consulted. Indeed, in some
155 commoners' families the children are treated little better than the farm ani-
855 mals, if that well. One occasionally sees a peasant woman or servant directing
858 her child to perform some chore by throwing clods of dirt or manure at him

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in the same half-interested manner in which the shepherd directs cattle by throwing stones.

The effect of Amhara socialization, then, is to inhibit rather than to stimulate the development of individuality. The spirited and expressive Amhara child of two or three is conditioned to become, for the rest of his childhood and to a large extent throughout life, taciturn, fearful, and slightly morose.

The traditional system of formal education is no less indifferent to the personality of the learner. The atmosphere of the schools where reading is taught is harsh and punitive. Pedagogy at all levels of instruction is based on repetition and memorization, with strict adherence to the conventions preferred by the teacher.* The traditional ban on the teaching of writing may also be related to the desire to keep the student's mind on received formulations. Amhara formal education in no wise seeks to cultivate the individual, but aims solely to prepare cultural specialists who will be able to perform the rituals and perpetuate the teachings of the Ethiopian Church. The instruction of noble children, finally, in the arts of riding, swimming, shooting, and playing the lyre has more to do with the transmission of the manners and skills appropriate to a position of high status than with a concern for personal development.

Music and Art

Music and dance are greatly enjoyed by the Amhara, but little attention is given to the cultivation of their forms or the refinement of their performance. The music is monodic, both melodically and rhythmically, and, except for some intricately structured accelerandos in certain religious hymns, consists chiefly in the indefinite repetition of a number of very limited musical ideas. Dance forms are still more limited and repetitive. In both genres, variation and the development of personal styles are not encouraged. Innovation, particularly in religious forms, is likely to meet strong resistance; witness the vigorous rejection of Alaqā Gabra Hānnā's innovations in dance by the masters at Gondar.

Like music and dance, Amhara design provides little scope for the free play of imagination. In pottery, basketry, and even in such antique ornamentation as appears on the coins and stelae of Aksum and the churches of Lalibela, the recurring style is that of the continuous repetition of simple geometric patterns. Painting provides a richer medium, but here again individuality is carefully constricted. The subject matter of pictures is limited by tradition to scenes concerning the life of Christ and the saints, and to the *res gestae* of emperors. The manner of treatment of these themes is

* A partial exception to this—the teaching of *qenē*—will be discussed below.

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further limited by a number of canons. For example, saints must have no shadows on their faces; "good" characters must be portrayed *en face*, "bad" ones in profile; and honored subjects must be portrayed on the right.* Virtually all aspects of the subject matter—dress, features, actions, symbolism—are prescribed by rigid conventions. That this degree of conformity reflects a cultural attitude and not a want of inventiveness on the part of Amhara artists is shown by the discoveries of Marcel Griaule, who collected hundreds of drawings in Gojjam in the form of silhouettes and graffiti, drawings based on direct observation and exhibiting an "astonishing diversity and revealing . . . a very great liberty of expression." Yet, Griaule observed, "these drawings are scorned by the people, who pay scarcely any attention to them; and by the artists themselves, who regard them as a sort of pastime of no importance, or as an activity reserved primarily for apprentices."[29]

In painting, as in the performing arts, individuality was suppressed not only by the pressure to conform to given models but also by the anonymity of the artists involved. This is more striking in the case of painting which, particularly in the form of miniatures, produced some exceptional works. But painting was carried out for the most part as a devotional activity, and its practitioners were apparently content to remain unknown.

The Written Word and the Oral Tradition

The written literature of Ethiopia provides as little scope for individuality as does its painting. Like the painters, the authors of the Ethiopian manuscripts have for the most part remained anonymous. Their subject matter has been narrowly circumscribed by the force of tradition, and their genres have been just as narrowly conventionalized.

Ethiopian literature consists primarily of religious writings, in the first instance of free translations from Greek, Syriac, and Arabic texts. Where the writings are original they tend to be either expositions of traditional beliefs and rituals of the church, eulogies of saints, or expressions of pious fantasy on religious themes. The nature of this literature is to extol sacred objects, not to express individual personality. The *Investigations of Zar'a Yā'qob*, a very personal and imaginative critique of prevailing orthodoxies dated in the seventeenth century and reminiscent of the French *philosophes*, is the exception that proves the rule; for this manuscript has proved to be a forgery, the work of a Franciscan missionary to Ethiopia in the early nineteenth century.[30]

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[175] * The seriousness with which such conventions seem to have been taken is shown by the episode of Brancaleone, a Venetian painter who was in Ethiopia during the reign of Ba'eda Māryām (1468–78), who is said to have provoked an uproar by painting a Madonna with the child on her left arm instead of the conventional right.

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The effect of this literature has not been, as David Riesman suggests is true of the written word generally, an individualizing one. It did not serve to "help liberate the reader from his group and its emotions, and allow the contemplation of alternative responses and the trying on of new emotions."[31] It has served rather to buttress conformity, by rekindling identification with the sacred symbols of the society. Ethiopian religious literature does not invite introspection; it is a corpus to be venerated and solemnly rehearsed. When a devout Ethiopian reads his daily or weekly portion from some writing such as the *Dāwit* (Psalms of David) or the *Weddāssē Māryām* (*Praise of Mary*), he is said to be "repeating" the text—*Dāwit yedaggemāl*. Most of those who learn to read the words of these writings do not understand the Ge'ez in which they are composed.

A similar function has been performed by the secular literature, which runs primarily in praise of royalty and thus has served to uphold the political status quo. The earliest Ethiopian writings are inscriptions of the Aksumite kings dating from the fourth century A.D. Here, in a style that is to persist through the ages, the royal deeds are recounted in meticulous detail and endowed with the highest morality.[32] Ge'ez chronicles were composed in this manner for most of the emperors after the thirteenth century. The earliest specimens of written Amharic consist of hymns in praise of the Emperor Amde Ṣeyon (1314–44).

Two other written works put the capstone on this conservative structure. The *Kebra Nagast*, the Ethiopian national epic, has served chiefly to legitimate the royal line that came to power in the thirteenth century and to cement once and for all the union of monarchy and church. The *Fetha Nagast*, the traditional legal code based on various canon and civil laws compiled in medieval Egypt, has served not as a working code for the adjudication of court cases but as an embellishment of *de facto* decisions, imparting to the judge an increment of authority by virtue of his ritual of referring to them.

Because of the relative sterility of Abyssinian written literature, art, dance, and music, many observers have concluded that Abyssinian culture provides no outlets for truly creative expression.[33] This judgment is not just. The Abyssinian genius freely discloses itself in the stories, verse, and proverbs that make up its very rich *oral* literature. Within this oral tradition, especially in its verse, a good deal of original expression and personalized commentary may be found.

Ethiopic verse comprises a wide variety of forms which differ according to subject and occasion. Classical *qenē*, Ge'ez verse in praise of some holy figure or political leader, is composed by *dabtarā* on certain religious or political holidays. More playful verses of praise are sung in Amharic by *dabtarā* or minstrels on festive occasions. In such verses the poet may in-

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*121 538 • 156 [726] sinuate insults through the ambiguities of his compliments, as was illustrated above. *Shĭllalā,* declaimed to arouse male courage before battle, is also heard at weddings and other festive occasions. Another type of exclamatory verse (*ho-berē*) is sung by the peasant at harvest time as he drives his cattle around the threshing floor. Verse of sorrow (*engurguro*) is intoned at time of bereavement or during moments of loneliness. Finally, in the conviviality of a drink-house enlivened by a minstrel, alone at work, or with a group of friends on various occasions, the Amhara finds that verse provides a medium for thoughts on almost any subject—people, places, animals, weather, love, work, and death. The following poem illustrates an important quality found in many of these verses, pessimism and irony, especially common in verses about love.

[539] Fish on the cliff, baboons in the sea;
The ass after honey, while hay draws the bee;
On a baking-pan of wax, butter to see;
Or a monk from Zegamel monastery
In the pagan land of Metcha to bury;
With an unsuited person in love to be;
Thus has it ended, my affair with thee.
Leave it, forget it, just let it rest—
A hapless ass at a hyena's breast.

[533] [534] These various sorts of verse may be either sung or spoken. The auditory effect is often enhanced by the accompaniment of musical instruments. When serious *qenē* has been recited by its author in church, it is usually repeated by a chorus of *dabtarā* singing to the slow beat of drums and sistrums. The sad strains of *engurgo* are sometimes accompanied by the mellow ten-stringed lyre, while an instrumental background for livelier subjects may be provided by the Abyssinian banjo or one-stringed violin.

Throughout these varieties of verse forms, certain conventions are followed. Most important, the lines are supposed to rhyme; that is, end with the same consonant-plus-vowel. Inferior poets achieve this rhyme at the expense of the words they use. In addition, proper rhythm must be maintained; the lines must not "break." This means that the flow of the line must be smooth and that the metrical pattern in one line—based on the number of accents, not syllables[34]—should be paralleled by the others. A poet who breaks his lines is satirized by being dubbed a "lion."

While observing these rules—and, in the case of *qenē,* the much more complicated rules pertaining to stanza forms and poetic figures—the Amhara poet *must also be original.* In the production of verse, individuality is explicitly emphasized. Poets who use verses composed by others—this is primarily true of students of *qenē*—are insulted with the term *lēbā* ("thief"). Similarly, a poet should not repeat himself. If he repeats the same word

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in a piece of verse, he is derided as an "ant." Once he has composed a certain verse, he is supposed to discard it and compose something new the next time.

The composition of original verse is by no means restricted to a class of professional poets. Every good Amhara is more or less adept at it. Extemporizing verse is a favorite activity at feasts, weddings, and in the aimless camaraderie of the drink-house. Sometimes a minstrel is on hand to begin the entertainment, but the usual pattern is for him to be fed verses extemporized by others present which he then embellishes with music. Even currently, with popular culture being manufactured and distributed out of Addis Ababa, urbanized Amhara place great value on the invention of new lyrics to suit the most popular tunes of the day.

Such verses customarily have not been written down. When unusually clever verses were invented, they were transmitted by word of mouth through the country and over generations. Or some individual would be noted for "owning" some couplet he composed or memorized, and people would turn to him whenever they wanted to hear it. Only in recent decades have some Ethiopians sought to preserve these verses in more durable manner by committing them to print.

Thus it is that, contrary to Riesman's correlation of the spoken word with traditionalistic functions and the written word with individualizing ones, and contrary to the common conception of the oral tradition as inherently rigid and unchanging,[35] oral literature provides the sole area in Amhara culture where conformity to existing works is shunned and the highest premium is placed on individuality.

Cultural Heroes

The last dimension of individualism to be treated here concerns the extent to which a society is inclined to single out individual personalities for special renown. We have seen that Amhara culture places little value on the moral worth of the individual as such, in that—with the limited exception of poetry—it does not encourage the development and expression of a distinctive and authentic self. And it might seem, from a superficial reading of Ethiopian history and culture, that the pre-eminent position of the emperor precluded anything like a general tendency to glorify outstanding individuals other than the sovereign. Yet our picture of Amhara culture cannot be complete without acknowledging the substantial place it has traditionally given to what may be called a "cult of the individual." For, with respect to at least three different qualities—saintliness, bravery, and cleverness—the Amhara have a marked tendency to idealize and remember outstanding individuals.

The idolization of saintly individuals has been an important part of

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Amhara religious experience. The favorite written literature consists of those genres which glorify individual saints for their special powers and great deeds. The *gadel* depicts the heroic struggles of saints against temptations and persecutions; the *tämher* relates their miraculous feats; and the *malka,* a verse form of some fifty five-line stanzas, consists of a rhapsodic description of the physical features and moral qualities of some saintly subject. The various *qenē* stanza types, moreover, serve largely to glorify individuals through the exotic use of religious symbolism—especially the nine-line *mawaddas,* which means "praise."

While these literary genres are accessible only to the learned few, the multitude also adores individual saints. Each of the saints has his particular following in the population, his popularity varying according to region and to the powers for which he is famed. This idolization has been directed not only to angels and legendary figures from the past, but also, to a lesser extent, to contemporaneous religious virtuosi and outstanding masters of the religious books.

Perhaps more prominent in Amhara life has been the glorification of brave men. The Abyssinian military ethic took the form of a cult of the hero. Personal bravery—not discipline, training, honor, or self-sacrificing loyalty—was the paramount virtue in Abyssinian warfare. The *guabaz* warrior was rewarded by his chief, praised by the minstrel, and esteemed by the populace. His bravery was ranked according to the fearfulness of the enemy vanquished. Thus, in Menelik's day the fanciest headdress was given to a noble who killed one of the fierce Danakil, a less fancy headdress being awarded the killer of the tough Raya Galla. Such actions constituted the one area in which personal boasting was permitted and, in fact, institutionalized in the genre known as *fukarā.*

We are indebted to Arnauld d'Abbadie for a firsthand account of the effect of this cult of the individual hero on the orientation of the Abyssinian warrior, in a passage so rare it is worth citing at length:

> The type of combat which [the Ethiopian] prefers over all others—because it gives him the most freedom to expand his personality—is that where, due to insufficiency of terrain or other circumstances, the chiefs can engage only a part of their forces. He loves to watch the skirmishers of the two armies spy out and accost one another while declaiming their martial themes. Joyously he throws off his toga to clad himself in some military ornament . . . and to mix himself in the widely spaced lines which follow one another and rise to the attack. He loves to comprehend the rationale of the manouvers of the two parties, to be able to judge the blows, to know under which hand the victims fall, to choose from among the enemy to avenge their death, to adapt his movements to the instincts which animate his companions, and to feel the earth tremble under the charges of cavalry which come as a squall

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> to change suddenly the whole configuration of battle. He loves to hear, amidst the crackle of rifle-fire, the huzzahs, the shouts, the challenges, the injuries, the encouragements, the allocutions, the piercing voice of the troubadours, and the rhythms of the flutes alternating with the lugubrious wailing of the trumpets; to know, finally, that on the hills, behind their drummers who beat out the charge in place, the two rival chiefs and the two armies are following him with their eyes, and that he may at one moment or another, return to his lord and, hurling before him some trophy, tell him, at the end of his war chant: "There! This is what I know how to do!"[36]

A cult of the individual obtains, in addition, with respect to the man with a genius for outsmarting others. Men who have beguiled their foes with particular cleverness, in litigation or in political intrigues, are scarcely less celebrated than religious virtuosi or heroic warriors. Anecdotes about great feats of shrewdness are the beloved stuff of Abyssinian folk history and are twice told around the fireplace.*[37] Some lords have enjoyed great reputations simply for being such successful and gifted scoundrels.

Cleverness in words counts as much, if not more, than clever deeds. Here we confront once more the phenomenon of wax and gold, but appearing in this context as a sort of finesse in personal relations. It is a question here of individuals made memorable because of their memorable lines, their talent for swiftly and surely employing the ambiguities of Amharic to satirize, at the right moment, some personality, or social type, or aspect of the human condition. Military or political events are often remembered more for the witty verse composed by some personage on the occasion than for their historical significance. In the present century, Naggādrās Tassamā Eshatē has been one of the most outstanding personalities of this sort, as was Alaqā Gabra Hānnā in the nineteenth century.

INDIVIDUALISM AND MODERNITY

The Traditional Pattern

Our inquiry thus far has involved analysis of the various ways in which self-orientation is and is not manifest among the Amhara, in lieu of the more simplistic question of whether Amhara society is individualistic or not. Building on this analysis, we may now attempt a more integrated interpretation of traditional Amhara society.

The predominant tendency in human relations among the Amhara is a disposition to seek, not unity based on affection, understanding, and/or responsi-

* A recent study which analyzed 1,086 stories with identifiable themes, told or written by Ethiopian children in grades two through eight, revealed that "cleverness pays" was by far the most frequently recurring theme.

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* 121 • 156 181 571 bility, but disunity based on the assertion of personal claims. This tendency is to some extent contained by feelings of politeness—an aesthetic of propriety—which are manifest in many ways. It is further contained by solidaristic sentiments closely tied to the feelings and experience of childhood: the euphoria of mealtime, on the one hand, and, on the other, a pervasive respect for figures of authority. But neither by virtue of identifying with social groups of any sort, nor through a sentiment of brotherhood with other men does the Amhara transcend an orientation that is directed to, and by, the narrower needs of the self.

Consistent with this type of subjective disposition, the organization of Amhara society does not rely to a significant extent on co-operative arrangements or the machinery of consensus. Nor does it involve, on the basis of either a division of labor or the sharing of diffuse obligations, the customary performance of numerous functions on behalf of territorial communities or other collectivities. Its main axis of organization, rather, is that of a highly personal relationship between superior and subordinate, with the subordinate existing essentially as an extension of the ego of the superior. This means that there is a marked discontinuity in the exertion of social constraints upon individuals. Within the segments of superior-subordinate relations—husband-wife, father-son, master-servant, teacher-pupil, confessor-confessant, lord-retainer, elder-youth—domination is virtually unlimited. Thus the main social restraints are in the form of repressive obligations—more or less "forced" labor, payment of heavy revenues, fasting—enjoined by figures of authority. Horizontally, however, there are very few obligations, and this accounts for the considerable amount of independence that appears among the Amhara. The demands of superiors, furthermore, are issued on a highly personal and spontaneous basis. They are not systematic, continuous, and detailed; the authority of superiors is not "rationalized." This accounts for the absence of discipline and synchronization, which is a further source of independence from external constraints.*

It is further consistent with the Amhara's egoistic orientation that objects which transcend the self—whether human communities or other groups or transcendent realities—are not greatly esteemed. With the exception, therefore, of those pious men whose paintings and religious studies served a truly devotional purpose, Amhara culture did not prescribe a desire for anonymity in behalf of transcendent values. On the contrary, it greatly valued the outstanding or heroic individual. In participating in this cult of the individual, the Amhara was not submerging his ego for the sake of broader realities but reasserting his ego through identification with the celebrated personality.

Yet for all this adulation of the individual, this substantial degree of social

* We may put all this another way by saying that while Amhara society is highly authoritarian, it is not at all totalitarian.

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freedom, and this assertion of egoistic claims, we have seen that the Amhara care very little for genuine individuality. With the limited exception of the sphere of oral literature, they do not cherish originality or creativity. With the exception of the sphere of litigation, where every man is accorded the right to speak his piece before a judge, they do not honor the dignity of the human person. Individuality as contrasted with conformity is not an Amhara value.

The explanation of this seeming paradox is not far to seek. It is, to use the terms we have been employing here, that concern for genuine individuality is grounded on solidaristic sentiment. Respect for the autonomy and uniqueness of individual selves, including one's own self, is a cultural value that can only exist if supported by a socially shared disposition to respect the integrity and dignity of others. Egoism and individuality are not only independently varying aspects of individualism; they are, in the sense in which we have been construing the latter term here, largely incompatible.

The Challenge of Modernity

Characterization of traditional Amhara society in these terms leads naturally to two general questions concerning the relation between Amhara individualism and Ethiopia's quest for modernity. The first question concerns the relation between the individualistic aspects of Amhara society and the organizational requirements of national development; the second concerns the promotion of individuality.

Whatever priority is given to the various goals more or less implicit under the rubric of "modernization," all of them entail a substantial increase in the mobilization of energies in behalf of societal ends. Whether the primary emphasis is placed on increasing per capita income, raising standards of health and education, building up military and diplomatic strength, or devising governmental institutions more responsive to popular sentiments and more efficiently run, an absolute increase in the available quantum of socially deployable human resources is indispensable.

Our analysis of Amhara society indicates that its traditions are not conducive to the mobilization of energies in behalf of communal goals. In this it differs from other African societies, such as those celebrated by the spokesmen for "African socialism"[38]—not to mention those of other peoples in Ethiopia like the Galla and the Gurage—where more "communitary" traditions would seem to provide a more viable basis for economic and social development at the community level. At the national level, where the developmental tasks are those of institution-building and education, the situation is no different. Here the need is for large numbers of people with modern education working to some degree in concert in behalf of national goals. But, as we have observed, the modern-educated Ethiopians have so far refrained from exerting them-

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selves as a strong progressive force in the national life. This is due, we suggested in the previous chapter, to a basic passivity related to the orality syndrome in Amhara culture. The considerations raised in this chapter seem no less relevant. The egoistic disposition and organizational laissez faire characteristic of traditional Amhara society affect no less their capacity for progressive action by inhibiting the uses of solidarity.

The atomism of the Ethiopian intelligentsia has been a conspicuous feature of their condition since they came into being. It is manifested in the basic distrust in their orientation toward one another as well as toward the rest of Ethiopian society. The regret of not being able to trust one's close friends is one of the more frequently heard confessions from their lips. The analysis presented in this chapter suggests that this reflects the attitudes and customs of traditional Amhara culture as much as it does the alleged saturation of the society with informers. That so few modern-educated Ethiopians have dared to break out of the vicious circle of distrust by daring to establish solidary relationships and to circumvent the prevailing fears and stagnation by establishing organizations of some sort is an illustration of the fact that, however much they may give lip service to the ideals of nationalism and populism, their hearts are primarily attached to winning new increments of prestige and income; in brief, to becoming director-generals.

Yet the total picture is by no means only one of atomism and stagnation. Some of the energies needed for Ethiopia's development can be, and have been, obtained by extending the traditional principles of domination and respect for authority into new areas of activity. Successful innovations in rural sanitation or agricultural practice, for example, have come about when local big men have been convinced of the desirability of the change and have then pressured the populace, by means of their authority and prestige, to implement the new measures. While the traditional authoritarian approach may for some time to come be the most ready method of mobilizing energies for social development, it alone cannot meet all the organizational needs of changing Ethiopia. One reason is that its effects are not continuous. To a large extent it depends on the whim and the physical presence of the relevant authority figure. It is common experience in Addis Ababa that particularly pressing problems are neglected for a long while, until the Emperor turns his attention to them; the matter then will be busily attended to for the moment, but is likely to be forgotten again when pressing matters turn the Emperor's attention elsewhere. This pattern is the model for most activity throughout the society where responsibility for specific problems is not carefully institutionalized.

Another shortcoming of the traditional political pattern is that it does not tap the potential energies now dormant in the population. Insofar as the mass of the people remain passive, involved in the developmental process only as

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The labor movement, limited as it is, has been in the hands of Eritreans on the one hand, and primarily non-Amhara workers in the south. Student associations have been formed chiefly at the instigation and under the aegis of foreign staff members; though here, as with the professional associations, modernized Amhara have sometimes played a leading role.

Once the new associations had been introduced, the Amhara like other Ethiopians were quick to adopt and expand them. Their participation in these new associations, however, has been affected, as might be expected, by the intrusion of traditional behavior patterns. Three examples of such behavior patterns come readily to mind.

(1) While the *equb* is conceived as a kind of credit union and as a focus for communal sociability, the *co-operative* sentiment tends to be lacking among members of Amhara *equb*, at least those of which the author has any knowledge. For example, in case of dire need, an *equb* member who desires the lump sum out of turn may be forced to *buy* the amount from the weekly winner, sometimes by forfeiting as much as ten or twenty per cent of the amount. By capitalizing on the crises of others, some enterprising *equb* members are able to sell their successful claims several times. Furthermore, in the early years of their existence, *equb* were frequently faced with the problem created by members who won the money early in the cycle, left town with the money, and did not return to pay their later installments. This difficulty has been met to some extent by the requirement of securing one or two guarantors for each person who enters an *equb*, but problems of this nature have led to altercations that have brought many *equb* members into court.

(2) The behavior of members of Amhara territorial *māhebar* is essentially that of a traditional social or civil gathering. The big men are seated in places of honor; the rest of the people stand quietly by. After a protracted period of exchanging greetings and milling about, the crowd listens respectfully while one or more of the big men makes a statement, and perhaps exchanges a few words with the group's secretary; and then the gathering disbands. Although the *māhebar* is organized with respect to the attainment of specific goals, the substance of the meetings is instumental to a very slight degree. The assembly rarely involves a meeting of minds to discuss an issue or a common problem, or to work out a program of action; but exists primarily as an occasion for the resonance of primordial sentiments by virtue of shared territorial attachments.

(3) In all associations, finally, certain traditional characteristics which are incongruent with the optimum conduct of groups come to the fore. This is no less true of the modern-educated than of the traditionals. Members fail to come on time to arranged meetings or neglect to come altogether.* They

* The *equb* has attempted to check this pattern by imposing fines on members who come late.

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resist taking responsibility and showing initiative. In general, they reveal little capacity for self-discipline in a collective setting.

The need for what can be accomplished through the new associations, however, transcends the intermittent obstacles to their effective functioning posed by such individualistic behavior. As modernization proceeds and as Ethiopians gain experience in these associations, one may expect that the more disruptive aspects of such behavior will be transformed in the direction of greater compliance with the implicit norms of group functioning. Amhara in the modernizing sector have no choice now but to replace the ethos of the *shĭftā*, the litigant, and the wandering student with that of the president, secretary, and treasurer if they are to remain true to the ambitions that have been awakened within them.

There are, moreover, a number of respects in which adequate functioning in modern groups may be supported by behavioral traits inherited from the past. Three of these traits in particular deserve to be mentioned in this context. One is the fundamentally respectful orientation toward others. This serves to reduce the outbreak of dissension among group members, and in the attitude of respect and obedience toward figures of authority provides the basis, given capable and decisive leaders, for a significant amount of concerted action among group members. A second trait of some importance is the acceptance of conflict as a natural and not particularly threatening component of human relations. This means that group members are ready to admit and deal with such conflicts as do emerge in their ranks, and are experienced in the resolution of such conflicts through the agency of elderly mediators or the more formal processes of litigation. Finally, the Amhara sense of humor—wry, realistic, attuned to the ironies of existence—introduces a salutary leavening ingredient into group process. It provides an outlet for the release of tensions in group situations and adds a certain flavor to group experience that often more than compensates for the lack of a hyperinstrumental orientation.

The Question of Individuality

Although effective modernization is unthinkable without a significant increase in solidaristic sentiments and rationalized organization, in Ethiopia as elsewhere, the fate of the other aspect of individualism discussed in this chapter—individuality as a cultural value—poses a more controversial question. If the essence of modernity is the systematic effort to control rationally man's physical and social environment, then the society of *1984* may be claimed as a possible modern utopia no less than the society in which all children go to Montessori schools and all adults paint, undergo psychoanalysis, and study Great Books. The cultivation of individuality stands as but one of many pos-

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*121 sible values commonly subsumed under the notion of modernity and must compete with other values, like that of maximizing efficiency in production, which are indifferent or antagonistic to it. The modernizing elites are thus faced with the question, whether they confront it openly or not, of the extent to which their political and cultural institutions should be encouraged to emphasize the dignity, integrity, and creativity of individuals.

And yet it can be argued that individuality, while not a necessary constituent of modernity—if, from the author's viewpoint, an extremely desirable and plausible constituent—may be an indispensable means of accomplishing any of the goals aspired to by the modernizing elites. The argument is that informed and reliable leadership, on the one hand, and responsible and effective criticism, on the other, depend ultimately on the existence of at least a minority of persons who can think for themselves and can have confidence in their thinking and in the possibility of meaningful communication with others. In terms of the collective interests of the national society, one could maintain that a developed individuality is *more* important for the elite of a transitional society than of a highly modernized nation.

*121 • 156 181 The weight of Amhara tradition opposes the graceful emergence of such a minority in Ethiopia. The pressures toward conformity and the inhibition of self-expression in most areas of life are, we have seen, characteristic of that tradition. The surly use of authority, the subtle sense of fatalism, the adulation of rank rather than human qualities, the distrust of innovation, the drabness of subsistence, the authority of conventional styles, the narrowness of outlook maintained by mass illiteracy and religious fundamentalism, the interpersonal aspects of the ethos of wax and gold (deception, insult, and intrigue)—these and related aspects of Amhara culture are formidable obstacles to the development of individuality among Ethiopians.[43]

Such a development is further impeded by two characteristics of Ethiopia's contemporary situation: the fear of criticism and the new "cult of personality." Given the Amhara emphasis on the deserts of status and the formalities of social intercourse, it is natural that the uses of honest criticism should have been kept to a minimum in their traditional social order. And thus it is that, from want of public habits of constructive criticism, traditions of self-examination have never emerged; rather, the ego has ever been first and foremost on the defensive to ward off all real or alleged slights to its dignity.[44] Altercation among Amhara has frequently arisen from a characteristic incapacity to accept advice and counsel, let alone criticism. This difficulty has been compounded by Ethiopia's present circumstance, for she finds herself, after centuries of living as she pleased with a mode of adjustment fairly well suited to the realities of traditional life, suddenly forced to acknowledge the inadequacy of her culture for purposes of living in the modern world. This situa-

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tion has prompted the hasty erection of new self-justificatory defenses and an extreme touchiness about being considered "primitive" or "backward." This sensitivity has been exacerbated by the fact that European politicians in pursuit of their colonial interests, and foreign journalists in pursuit of sensational stories, have shown no compunctions about dwelling on and exaggerating some of the more unflattering aspects of Ethiopian culture. In such an emotional climate, the attempt to be objective about one's country and one's self, to engage in self-examination that is both sympathetic and critical, can be carried out only by efforts that are profoundly heroic.

The situation has scarcely been improved, moreover, by the form taken by the "cult of the individual" in contemporary Ethiopia. The centralization of power has been accompanied by a radical centralization of prestige. The cult of personality occasioned by the ascendance of Haile Selassie overshadows all public life in Ethiopia. It is manifest in the ubiquitous photographs; the naming of countless streets, plazas, schools, and other institutions after him; and in the unremitting praise and adulation accorded him in all public speeches and mass media. Other individuals have normally been accorded recognition only by virtue of their proximity to him, while individuals possessing attainments in their own right, and thus some claim to public attention, have deliberately been kept in the shadows. Domestic news conveyed through the press and radio has largely consisted of the minutiae of the Emperor's daily activities, including such matters as the exact time at which he performs any public function and all the words he speaks on any occasion. This cult of personality has further been advanced in the Ethiopian press by its adherence to a number of conventions respecting the person of the Emperor, such as that of placing the name of the Emperor at the beginning of any article in which he is mentioned; capitalizing all references to the Emperor, including all pronouns; and attributing all developments and progress reported in the newspapers to the initiative and foresight of the Emperor and his government.[45]

The political implications of this phenomenon need not concern us here. Whether the monopolization of prestige as well as power by the Emperor may have a primarily beneficial effect, through providing an authoritative symbol that can link the multifarious elements of the Ethiopian state; or whether, as was the case with Bismarck, the elimination of other possible pre-eminent personalities is laying the basis for a leadership vacuum for which the coming generation may pay dearly, is a question that cannot yet be answered. In this context we are concerned only with establishing the point that the ascendance of a cult of personality such as now obtains in Ethiopia eliminates not only the bestowal of public esteem for authentic individual performance, but also deprives the people of exercise in a crucial prerequisite

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of individuality—loyal criticism toward the government, one's friends, and one's self.

Besides the efforts of those courageous Ethiopians who, in exile abroad or living in inner exile at home, have steadfastly worked to develop their powers of integrity and their capacities of independent judgment, there is but one force that holds any promise of increasing the scope of personal autonomy and creativity in Ethiopia, and that is education. The fate of Ethiopia one and two generations hence is linked, more closely than members of large, industrialized societies can readily appreciate, with a single small institution: the Haile Selassie I University. As pinnacle of the country's educational system, it sets the standards, prepares the teachers, and devises many of the innovations to be used throughout the nation's schools. No less important, its relative independence from the national government gives it a certain leeway to pursue policies based primarily on academic considerations. The Ministry of Education, which administers all other secular schools in the country, is necessarily more subjected to the routine pressures of domestic politics. The university, on the other hand, by virtue of its many expatriate staff members and its dependence on outside financial help, is more intimately tied to international academic standards and practices. While a growing number of qualified Ethiopians have joined its staff, for some time to come the University will necessarily be greatly dependent on assistance from academic men from other countries. In any event, it is likely to remain in continuous contact with the outside world by virtue of its participation in the international community of scholars. This condition may give it a degree of autonomy and insulation that can but further the patient development of Ethiopia's most sorely needed asset: cadres of individuals who can resist the facile slogans of the day and work to provide for Ethiopia's great transformation the benefits of enlightened aims and realistic practices.